HARAMBEE NEWS

VOL. II No. 2 March 1980 P.O. BOX 2500 LINCOLN, NEB. 68502

Mashairi funguwani/Poets: open the riddle

HEAR MY WOMAN SONG, O MAN

Hear/feel/taste my woman song, O Man,
the melody is coded in tongue strokes.
My song is fire.
Surfacing in flames of rhythm,
carried from the place of all beginnings,
carried on the claws,
tucked beneath the wings.

My song -- a seed planted
by the gods of our creation;
that you, O Man, and I, may celebrate.

Hear/feel/taste my woman song,
that rocks you to discovery,
and we climb and leap into the flame/song,
and touch in the fire/dance of our beginning.
My song is fire.

Hear/feel/taste my woman song, O Man,
that fills your mouth with flame,
the heated chant closes down your eyes,
and welds our limbs,
locked in fire/song.
Your lips and hands believe more
than they touch,
your mouth remembers and forgets more
than thirst, the thirst my woman song fills.
My song is fire.

Hear/feel/taste my woman song, O Man,
that beats against your ears,
in waves of flame.
My song re/arranges reality to soothe you,
as the seed propels us to the place
of our beginning.
My song removes a thousand fears.
My song re/orders time and space.
My song is fire.

-Imua Alameen

RESULTS OF HARAMBEE SURVEY ON QUESTION OF BLACK/WHITE RELATIONSHIPS

Question #1- How do you feel about black male/white female relationships?

Favorable(7) Unfavorable(6) Neutral(8)

Question #2- Have you had a relationship with a white woman?

Yes(17) No(3)

Question #3-What do/did you like about the relationship?

"All aspects(8)" "Money(3)" "Communication(2)" -vs.- "Negative reactions from others(1)" "Feelings of guilt(1)"

Question #4- Do you prefer a white woman to a black woman?

Yes(1) No(10) Neutral(8)

Question #5- Why?

"Black woman takes, white woman gives(1)" -vs.- "Common bond between black me and black women(5)" "Sincerity of black women" "Trust in black women" "Black women are special" "social, cultural, and other conflicts involved in relationships with white women"

Question #6- Are there any cultural differences between black and white women?

Yes(5) No(10) Neutral(8)

Question #7- What do you look for in a relationship?

"Understanding(8)" "Trust(7)" "Companionship(5)" "Unity of purpose" "sex" "femininity" etc.

Question #8- Do you see any connection between black/white relationships and the black struggle for freedom?

Yes(6) No(11)

Question #9- Do you feel comfortable with a white woman while in the presence of black women?

Yes(11) No(1) Unsure/sometimes(3)

Question #10- If not, why?

"Feelings of guilt(2)" "Reactions of black women(1)"

Question #11- How do you feel about relationships between black women and white men?

Neutral(11) Negative(4)

Editor's Comment:

Our new educational chairman, Rafiq Samuels, and myself prepared and conducted this survey as part of series of programs Harambee, in cooperation with the U.N.L. African People's Union, has been conducting on the issue of relations between black men and black women. It is becoming increasingly apparent that there are serious problems standing in the way of harmonious relationships between black men and black women. And the problems are numerous, as evidenced by the growing number of black women writers addressing them in articles, plays, novels, etc.

At a general membership meeting in February at which the topic of discussion was relations between black men and black women, two concerns kept popping up from the Sisters we had here from the African People's Union: varying levels of emotional insecurity on the part of black men and the tendency for an increasing number of black men to turn a blind eye toward Sisters and to gravitate toward white women. The comments of some of our members seemed to support the validity of these complaints. The survey was conducted to examine more closely the attitudes of Harambee members as to the question of black male/white female relationships. The questions were read to the members and they were asked to write down their answers anonymously and place their answers in a bag which was passed around. It was felt that anonymity would provide the best chances for honest responses.

At our March 17th. general membership meeting, we gave the results of the survey and conducted discussion on the basis of those results with our membership and our outside guests, most of whom were black women from the African People's Union. The ensuing interaction was relatively sedate at first but gradually

became very passionate. The main and most vigorously argued positions were: that love and/or sexual relationships have no color; that, owing to the realities of white racist oppression in the U.S., color does make a difference and black men and black women should recognize their common bonds and relate to each other exclusively; that there is nothing wrong with the fact that there might be a particular interracial relationship but that a black man or woman's preference for a white mate is indicative of racial self-hatred; and that who a man or woman chooses for a mate is a personal affair and no one else's business.

As a black man and as chairman of the Harambee Afro-Cultural Organization, I am more than a little concerned about the apparent casualness with which some of my Brothers approach the matter of interracial male/female relationships. The view that color makes no difference is a commendable and egalitarian view but one that is utterly contradicted by the American reality, the world reality. While it is true that those who hold the reins of power in this country are an extremely small minority of the population and that all people in this country who are not a part of that ruling clique are oppressed, it is also true that the vast majority of oppressed white folks do not recognize their powerlessness and allow themselves to be used in a game of racism whereby the existence of non-white people is made even more of debilitating experienced. The fact is that we are systematically denied employment, adequate income, suitable housing, effective public school education, etc. and that these denials occur on the basis of the color of our skin. And here I speak of denials and deprivations that cannot be accounted for simply on the basis of the overall oppression guaranteed for the public at large by the requirements of the so-called "free enterprise" system. And these are concrete realities that cannot be ignored.

There is another reality. Our origins are not in America but in Africa. Our forefathers and mothers were shipped here as cargo to build this country. They were beasts of burden. And while the superficialities have changed, our function in this country has not changed. Of course we're allowed to wear three-piece suits now, live among the white folks, drink tea and eat crumpets if we happen to be so inclined, etc. But, qualitatively, we have no more rights or exercise no more power now than we ever have. Is it, then, unreasonable for it to be suggested that we may have to stand together, that we may have to be willing to sacrifice individual likes for group interests? We are in the situation of a poor family. A child in our household might want two helpings of carrots. But shouldn't that child be willing to limit him or herself to just one helping if that second helping might mean the few pennies difference between a paid utility bill and an unpaid one? The point was made at the last Harambee meeting, in the course of discussion of the black economic condition in the U.S., that we waste a lot of money. We do. We buy a lot of things we do not need. We seek self-esteem in status symbols: luxury cars, faddish clothing, etc. An absurd amount of our wages are spent on alcohol and drugs. And this waste goes on for non-essentials while many of our needs go unmet.

But how do we address this issue of economic waste or the issue of waste of human resources, via black-on-black crime and subsequent disproportionate(as to race) imprisonment of our people, or other of these issues without an earnest effort to truly identify with each other and our collective needs? Our situation requires our solidarity. It requires that we throw off the decadent clothes of individualism given to us by America to wear.

"If I want me a white woman, that's my business." But can it be that the business of black people generally is not the business of each individual black man, woman, and child? Yes, love does transcend color ideally. But what about one's love for his or her own people with whom he or she shares a common heritage and a common suffering? Doesn't such a love actively respond to the existence of the hundreds of thousands of black women and children who are out there trying to make it on their own, to the fact that there are approximately 100 black women for every 83 black men in the United States, to the fact that nearly a half million black men fill this country's jails and prisons? I too have had relationships with white women. And a couple

of those relationships were loving, were meaningful. Other black men have had such relationships. But it has become apparent to me that our collective situation requires another look at these relationships and affairs. How indicative of racial self-hatred might such relationships be, particularly in the case of black men who exhibit a consistent pattern of preference for white women? And there is a more pragmatic question. If we as black men intend to provide our communities with leadership, intend to influence our people toward the achievement of greatness and intend to do these things standing side by side with our white warrior queens, knowing that black male/white female relationships are a cause of probably justified resentment and hurt on the part of black women, where the hell could we possibly be coming from?

The Harambee Afro-Cultural Organization has not taken a position on this question of black male/white female(or vice versa) relationships. There are different views among our membership. And no view has been declared the official one. However, there is one view that is common among the membership, and that view is that we exist to promote the liberation of black people. And I have raised these questions in hopes that we, in examining them, might at the very least be willing to take another look at ourselves and what meaning the conditions around us have in how we identify with both those conditions and our people.

David L. Rice

VEIL OF MADNESS

Oh how I long to break free from this veil of madness that enfolds me.

I know I must maintain my sanity; for one day I shall be free.

My loneliness I know so very well; for it came along when I slipped and fell.

I cast my mind out to play with my fondest memory of yesterday; for who knows what tomorrow will bring?--happiness or more broken dreams? But, whatever the case,may be, I'm still fighting to break free from this veil of madness over me. Orlando Jackson

EXECUTIVE BOARD POSTS FILLED

The vacated posts of secretary and educational chairman have been filled by the chairman with the approval of the general membership. Our new secretary is Thawabu(Nate Deckard) and the new educational chairman is Rafiq Samuels.

LITERARY ANNOUNCEMENT

NETHULA JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE is soliciting material for their November 1980 issue "Songs For A New Nation" dedicated to South Africa. Poetry, short stories, essays, and photos depicting the struggles, conditions, victories of the South African people. Deadline is August 31, 1980. Send with a brief bio sketch to P.O. Box 50368, Washington, D.C., 20004.

FRIENDS OF HARAMBEE HONORED

During the Feb. 22-23 Big Eight Conference on Black Student Government held at Kansas State University, the University of Nebraska(at Lincoln)'s black student organization, the African People's Union, was selected as the most progressive of black student government organizations in the Big Eight Conference. Doreen Charles, present chairperson of A.P.U., was selected as the most outstanding individual in black student government among the eight schools.

The Harambee Afro-Cultural Organization is pleased that Sister Charles and A.P.U. have received this honor and is confident, based on the spirit of cooperation exhibited by Sister Charles and other members of A.P.U. in their work with us, that the honor is well-deserved. We earnestly support the efforts of A.P.U. to further the interests of black people in the Lincoln area and hope their efforts will be rewarded by the fulfillment of its hopes and plans for progress.

.....

THE HARAMBEE NEWS IS A PUBLICATION OF THE HARAMBEE AFRO-CULTURAL ORG./P.O. BOX 2500/ LINCOLN, NEB./68502. PLEASE SEND US YOUR ARTICLES, OTHER WRITING OR MONEY CONTRIBUTIONS.